

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2005

The Honorable William Frist
U.S. Senate
Majority Leader
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
U.S. Senate
Minority Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
U.S. House of Representatives
Speaker
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
Minority Leader
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senate Majority Leader Frist, Senate Minority Leader Reid, Speaker Hastert, and House Minority Leader Pelosi:

Since 1982, bipartisan majorities of Congress have supported moratoriums on new mineral leasing activity on submerged lands of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). Additionally, in 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed an executive order placing a ten year moratorium on new leasing in the OCS, which was later renewed by President Clinton through 2012. We are writing to express our concerns about some attempts in the Senate omnibus energy bill which could jeopardize this longstanding moratorium.

As Floridians we continue to oppose drilling in the Gulf of Mexico because of our interest in preserving our vital tourism industry and our delicate ecosystem. If an accident were to occur, causing an oil slick to wash ashore, the damage would be devastating to the state economy.

You may recall, in 2002, after the House passed an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2002 Interior Appropriations bill which banned drilling in portions of the eastern Gulf of Mexico, an agreement was reached between the White House and the State to buy back offshore leases within the Destin Dome area, roughly 12.5 miles off of Pensacola's coast. We are concerned that any alteration in the lease sale area near "sale area 181" may weaken this agreement.

An amendment adopted in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee includes language that authorizes an inventory of natural gas and oil in the OCS through seismic surveys. These procedures produce a sound source that is a periodic, repetitive blast in the water column created by a towed "sparker," or "airgun," which repeatedly sends a sharp spike of loud acoustic pulse through the water and into the seafloor. We want to ensure that this activity would not pose any threat to the commercial and recreational fishing interests in Florida or to the health of the fisheries.

Further, there have been recent proposals that have attempted to redraw state lines to allow companies to begin leasing activity in areas that have been protected for more than 20 years. Various attempts to weaken the State of Florida's ability to protect our economy and the nation's

security include "opt-out" provisions, revenue sharing of royalties based on the development of oil and gas in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, and mandating redundant inventories of oil and gas.


This threat is not limited to the tourism and fishery industries. Since the closing of the ranges in Vieques, Puerto Rico, the Gulf of Mexico is home to a number to training ranges for the US military. Additionally, Eglin AFB and Tyndall AFB use the Gulf Ranges to test and evaluate the latest weapons systems and platforms to fight the War on Terror. If petroleum companies were allowed to begin to explore and develop leases, potential impediments to our military training exercises and testing missions would be created. Now is not the time to be hamstringing our military readiness.

While we support attempts to produce a viable, long-term energy strategy for our nation that includes provisions to lessen our dependence on foreign fuels, patience is essential in making the necessary decisions to balance our economic needs and the energy needs of our country. The developments in the deep waters off of our coasts are proving that the eventual return on our investments is going to exceed expectations. To date, there have been over 100 deepwater discoveries in the Gulf of Mexico alone, each with triple the amount of oil per day produced than what is currently found in the shallower areas.

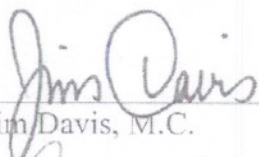
In conclusion, as the Senate considers the energy bill, we urge you to join us in protecting Florida's coastline by ensuring that potentially harmful provisions are not included in any omnibus energy legislation. We look forward to working with you to ensure that our coastal protections are continued in the Senate bill, as well as any final conference report.

Thank you for your consideration to this matter.

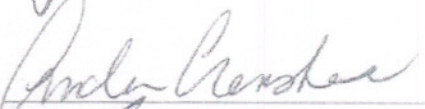
Sincerely,



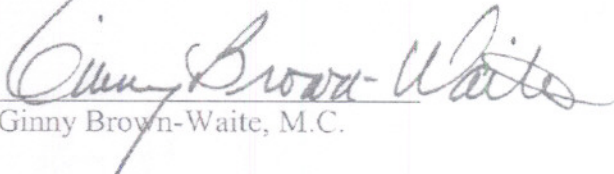
Senator Bill Nelson



Jim Davis, M.C.



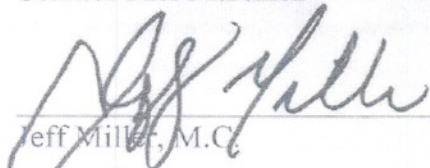
Ander Crenshaw, M.C.



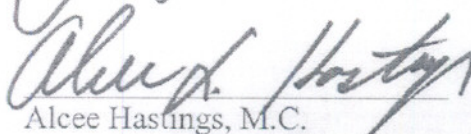
Ginny Brown-Waite, M.C.



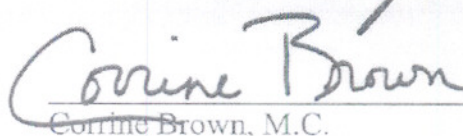
Senator Mel Martinez



Jeff Miller, M.C.



Alcee Hastings, M.C.



Corrine Brown, M.C.

Allen Boyd
Allen Boyd, M.C.

Clay Shaw
Clay Shaw, M.C.

Mark Foley
Mark Foley, M.C.

Robert Wexler
Robert Wexler, M.C.

Tom Feeney
Tom Feeney, M.C.

Katherine Harris
Katherine Harris, M.C.

Lincoln Diaz-Balart
Lincoln Diaz-Balart, M.C.

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, M.C.

Cliff Stearns
Cliff Stearns, M.C.

Mike Bilirakis
Michael Bilirakis, M.C.

Kendrick Meek
Kendrick Meek, M.C.

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Connie Mack
Connie Mack, M.C.

C. W. Bill Young
C. W. Bill Young, M.C.

Ric Keller
Ric Keller, M.C.

Mario Diaz-Balart
Mario Diaz-Balart, M.C.

Adam Putnam
Adam Putnam, M.C.

Dave Weldon
Dave Weldon, M.C.